

Lesson Planning

1. Lesson planning can be daunting if you haven't had any teaching experience before. Don't worry it will get quicker and quicker as you go along. They do not need to be perfect minute to minute guides but more an outline of how your lesson is going to progress. By all means, create a detailed plan if that is what makes you most comfortable, but it may be most successful if it's a flexible rather than a play-by-play plan. Experienced teachers or spontaneously creative individuals may do fine with a small bag of supplies, a few worksheets and a couple of reading selections. People newer to teaching may need to prep a little more.

2. We will provide you with some examples of lesson plans before you start but here is a rough guide to what a 50/60 minute lesson could look like:

- Last lesson review / activity – 10 mins
- Introduce new grammar / vocab – 10 mins
- Guided practice (to reinforce new material i.e. a worksheet/activity) – 10 mins
- Independent practice (something the students do on their own i.e. game/activity/worksheet) – 10 mins
- Closing review (an activity to review the material covered in the lesson) – 10 mins

3. We want to make our lessons as interactive and enjoyable as possible. To do this we want to minimise the amount of time where only the teacher is speaking. When introducing new vocabulary or grammar try to involve the students in the process i.e. flashcards or acting it out. Try to avoid teaching grammar on its own. Incorporate the grammar into pre-prepared sentences or phrases and base activities around that.

4. Learning another language has four major components: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Try to have a mix of these components in your lessons and make sure students speak and read aloud. Let your students have the chance to participate! You may need to encourage the shyer ones to speak, and urge them to get out of their comfort zones.

5. Repeat and review, especially when introducing new words or structure. Repeat concepts in class time several times and in several different ways. Ask questions to see if your students understand. Begin each class with a review of last week's themes or vocabulary. Everyone likes to feel successful! Because the culture is so polite and non-confrontational, students will usually not tell you if they are lost or intimidated; they just won't come back.

6. It is always worth having another activity or two prepared if something doesn't work. Quite often an activity that looks brilliant on paper doesn't work out in the classroom and you should be prepared for this. It can be a really simple game like 'hangman' or 'duck duck goose' that you can adapt easily to cover the lesson's vocab or grammar.

7. When planning activities don't make them too difficult. You should try and make them slightly above the students' level so it pushes them but not confuses them. Giving clear instructions and checking comprehension is really important for lower level learners.

Checking Comprehension

1. Checking comprehension is a very important part of language learning. It allows you to see whether or not the students have understood new material or grammar and then if you need to review or re-teach.

2. If you do need to review or re-teach parts of the curriculum make sure that you approach it in a different way. If they didn't understand it the first time they probably won't understand it again with the same instructions/activities.

3. How to check –

- Ask students to repeat instructions
- Concept check questions – i.e. What color is an elephant?
- Misconception check – give students the wrong answer and ask them to correct and explain why
- Ask them to rate out of 5 how well they understand the material (good for end of lessons)
- Pause before asking students to answer – this allows more time for slower students
- Don't speak too slowly (unnatural) and don't speak too fast (they won't understand)
- Don't ask yes or no questions – this can be a bad indicator as there are only two answers, if you do use yes or no questions prepare more than one
- Avoid asking 'do you understand?' – they will all say they understand

Classroom Management

1. If students are being badly behaved – don't panic and don't over react. A student is much more likely to respond positively if you speak to them normally. Don't get flustered if students have lots of energy and aren't paying attention. After a couple of lessons you will be able to tell where the problems are and you can make adjustments accordingly i.e. changing the seating arrangement.

2. If problems persist with certain students they can be sent home and if it continues then we can call the parents. However, we have only had to do this once in the history of the program. On the whole the students are well behaved and a good lesson plan goes a long way to mitigating discipline problems.

3. Competition works if it's not too one-on-one, especially if there are enough students to make groups that can work cooperatively. Think of ways to modify common group games like Charades, Simon Says etc. A good method for encouraging participation in lessons is prizes. You can base this around a single game or the whole lesson. For example, every student starts the lesson with 5 points and you can take them away for bad behaviour or award them for good behaviour/correct answers.

4. It is worth keeping in mind that everyone has different learning styles (visual, auditory etc.). We don't expect our teachers to identify these in individual students but it is worth keeping in mind when planning your activities. Mix up word games, reading activities, physical games, songs and blackboard time. Strict grammar lessons are much less important to this group than comfort with speaking and understanding.

5. Watch your students' faces for context clues to see if they are understanding, frustrated, bored or confused. Don't be afraid to change an activity in mid-stream if it doesn't seem to be working. There are many things you can do without previous preparation: Always have a book or worksheet tucked away that you can pull out and read out loud, then go over vocabulary from the reading and write sentences about it. Ask each person the same question and compare answers. Get them to describe as best they can important holidays or events coming up in town. Ask about their families. Pair them up and get them to "interview" each other. Have them write their life story. Have them interview new volunteers and ask questions about their states or countries etc.

6. When working in groups try to mix abilities and interests. Don't put the quietest student with the loudest, it is better that the students feel comfortable communicating.

7. Positive reinforcement always works better than direct criticism -- especially in this culture where people rarely make direct negative comments.

Don't over correct weaker students, it can affect their confidence. If someone is having difficulty, offer them some help and encouragement. For stronger students, try to elicit answers instead of giving it to them. If students are struggling with expressing themselves in English, you can help out by saying "Yes!" and stating the phrase correctly, without criticism.